

# **Executive Summary and Authorized Officer's Determination For the Madison Watershed Assessment**

Bureau of Land Management  
Dillon Field Office

This document summarizes the findings of the Madison Watershed Assessment (MW) conducted during the 2009 field season. The watershed includes 39 grazing allotments (30,729 acres) and about 7,000 acres of un-allotted land, 4,500 of which is in the Bear Trap Wilderness Area.

The *Madison Watershed Assessment Report* describes the existing condition of BLM administered lands within the watershed. The assessment also presents management and project recommendations for improving resource conditions where needed. Please refer to the report for a complete discussion of resource conditions, concerns and management opportunities.

In January, 2010, the BLM will begin National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation. The NEPA document will include all BLM-administered public lands covered in the Madison Assessment. Alternative management will be analyzed wherever it is determined that allotments are not meeting the Standards, allotments are meeting the Standards but have site specific resource concerns, there are noxious weed infestations, unhealthy forest conditions, and/or fuels conditions outside the natural range of variability.

The issue of scale must be kept in mind in evaluating each standard. It is recognized that isolated sites within a landscape may not be meeting the standards; however, considering broader scope and scale, the area may be in proper functioning condition. No single indicator provides sufficient information to determine rangeland health; they are used in combination to provide information necessary to determine rangeland health. Alternatively, just because a standard is being met does not mean that the conditions on the ground represent desired resource condition or objectives. For example an upland site with reduced composition of bunchgrasses may meet the upland health standard if it sustains a native plant community, even if it is dominated by low producing, low palatability grasses, shrubs and or forbs. While such a site may have stable soils and allow for proper hydrologic function, it won't provide the livestock forage or wildlife cover that it would if it was dominated by taller, more palatable plants.

The table below summarizes the determination of rangeland health standards by allotment. It also briefly describes the significant factors identified by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) on allotments where one or more of the Standards are not in compliance.

Allotment Name Number	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Significant Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio-diversity	
Aspen Creek #10540	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by cattle.
Axolotl #20485	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	No	Forest Health; loss of white bark pine stands.
Bar Seven #10457	No	N/A	Yes <sup>1,2</sup>	Yes	No	Reduction of the dominant functional-structural plant community (cool season grasses) in the river pasture.
Billie Mine Isolated #20430	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Carter #20386	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Cliff Lake #10437	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Corral Creek #10543	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Dehaan #20390	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Easter #20393	Yes	Yes	No <sup>1,2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Lower Madison River does not support all Beneficial Uses, BLM management is not a contributing factor.
Elmer #20394	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by cattle, roads, and abandoned mine debris and features.

Allotment Name Number	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Significant Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio- diversity	
Flying D #20420	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Heavy infestations of leafy spurge throughout the allotment.
Glen Kyle #20412	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Jourdain #20410	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Kelly Meridian #10539	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Ledyard- McGuinness #20416	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Maltby's Mound #30402	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
McAtee Bridge #10529	No	Yes	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes	No	Substantial reduction of the dominant functional-structural plant community (cool season grasses); current livestock management; spotted knapweed infestations.
Michel #20417	No	No	1	Yes	Yes	Abandoned mine debris and features along Bradley Creek; spotted knapweed infestations in the uplands.
Mill Creek-Gustin #10465	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	None
MVHPA #10550	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	None
North Indian Creek #10140	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	None

Allotment Name Number	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Significant Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio- diversity	
North Meadow Creek #10380	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
North Morgan #20423	No	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Reduction of the dominant functional-structural plant community (cool season grasses); current livestock management.
Parent Isolated #20406	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	None
Pony Gulch Isolated #20405	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Preacher Creek #20404	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by cattle.
Red Bluff #00982	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Revenue Common AMP #20407	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by cattle and unauthorized OHV use.
Shirley #10436	No	Yes	1	Yes	No	Spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, and cheatgrass infestations.
Sitz #00438	No	Yes	1	Yes	No	Cattle management facilities constructed on BLM administered land; bare ground, cheatgrass infestations; crested wheatgrass seeding.
Strawberry Ridge #10421	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Sun Ranch Isolated #20460	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None

Allotment Name Number	Are Healthy Rangelands Standards Being Met?					Significant Factors in Failing to Achieve Standards
	Upland	Riparian Wetland	Water Quality	Air Quality	Bio- diversity	
Trail Creek C&H AMP #30401	Yes	Yes	No <sup>1,2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Lower Madison River does not support all Beneficial Uses, BLM management is not a contributing factor
Trout Creek #20496	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Wall Creek AMP #10522	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	None
Wall Creek Game Range #00819	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>1,2</sup>	Yes	Yes	None
Wallace Peak AMP #10447	Yes	No	1	Yes	Yes	Impacts to riparian areas by cattle
Willow Creek #10440	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	None
Windy Pass AMP #20385	Yes	No	1	Yes	No	Forest health; loss of white bark pine stands; impacts to riparian areas by cattle.

<sup>1</sup> Tributary streams in the MW are not on the 303(d) list, are not priority streams, and are not scheduled to be evaluated by the DEQ.

<sup>2</sup> The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has the responsibility for making water quality determinations and has completed its evaluation of 303(d)-listed streams. Middle Madison and Lower Madison River, as well as Ennis Lake border or flow through BLM administered land, have been evaluated by Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and beneficial use support determinations have been completed. Middle Madison Supports all Beneficial Uses. Ennis Lake and Lower Madison do not meet at least one Beneficial Use and a TMDL is required

## Authorized Officer's Determination

Based on my review of the *Madison Watershed Assessment Report*, the interdisciplinary team's recommendations and other relevant data and information, I have determined that the following 25 allotments and all the un-allotted and un-leased parcels of BLM administered land in the MW **meet** all five Standards for Rangeland Health and conform to the eleven guidelines for livestock grazing management established for BLM lands in Western Montana.

- |                         |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Billie Mine Isolated | 2. Carter               | 3. Cliff Lake             |
| 4. Corral Creek         | 5. Dehaan               | 6. Easter                 |
| 7. Glen Kyle            | 8. Jourdain             | 9. Kelly Meridian         |
| 10. Ledyard-McGuinness  | 11. Maltby's Mound      | 12. Mill Creek-Gustin     |
| 13. MVHP                | 14. North Indian Creek  | 15. North Meadow Creek    |
| 16. Parent Isolated     | 17. Pony Gulch Isolated | 18. Red Bluff             |
| 19. Strawberry Ridge    | 20. Sun Ranch Isolated  | 21. Trail Creek C&H       |
| 22. Trout Creek         | 23. Wall Creek AMP      | 24. Wall Creek Game Range |
| 25. Willow Creek        |                         |                           |

The Easter and Trail Creek C&H allotments aren't meeting the Water Quality Standard because the Lower Madison River flows through them and is on Montana DEQs 303(d) list. However, BLM authorized activities including livestock management are not significant causal factors in failing to meet the standard.

I have determined that the following 11 allotments **do not meet** one or more of the Standards for Rangeland Health. I have also determined that current livestock management is a significant contributing factor in these standards not being met.

- |                        |                 |                   |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Aspen Creek         | 2. Bar Seven    | 3. Elmer          |
| 4. McAtee Bridge       | 5. North Morgan | 6. Preacher Creek |
| 7. Revenue Commons AMP | 8. Shirley      | 9. Sitz           |
| 10. Wallace Peak AMP   | 11. Windy Pass  |                   |

In addition, I have determined the following three allotments **do not meet one** or more of the Standards for Rangeland Health. I have also determined that current livestock management is **not** a significant causal factor in failing to meet the Standard.

- |                  |             |           |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Axolotl Lakes | 2. Flying D | 3. Michel |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|

Pursuant to 43 CFR 4180.2(c), the authorized officer shall take appropriate action as soon as practicable but not later than the start of the next grazing year upon determining that existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on public lands are significant factors in failing to achieve the standards and conform with the guidelines that are made effective under this section. Appropriate action means implementing actions that will result in significant progress toward fulfillment of the standards and significant progress toward conformance with the guidelines. Practices and activities subject to standards and guidelines include the development of grazing-related portions of activity plans, establishment of terms and conditions

of permits, leases and other grazing authorizations, and range improvement activities such as vegetation manipulation, fence construction and development of water.

An environmental assessment which will propose and analyze management alternatives necessary to address or correct identified resource concerns will be prepared in early 2010.

Authorized Officer's Signature:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dillon Field Manager

Date: \_\_\_\_\_